



**Ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel
to contribute further to the sound management of
chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution**

Third session

Geneva, 17–21 June 2024 and Punta del Este, Uruguay, 15–18 June 2025*

Agenda item 4

Preparation of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel

**Foundational document and related draft decision for
consideration by the intergovernmental meeting to establish a
science-policy panel**

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution held the first part of its third session in Geneva from 17 to 21 June 2024. The ad hoc open-ended working group was unable to finalize its work in preparing proposals for the panel, and it agreed that a resumed third session would be organized back to back with the intergovernmental meeting to establish a science-policy panel.
2. At the first part of the third session, the ad hoc open-ended working group agreed that the outcomes of the discussions would be annexed to the provisionally adopted report on that part of the session (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/5), and that annexes I and II to that report would be transmitted to the ad hoc open-ended working group at its resumed third session with a view to finalizing the foundational document and the draft rules of procedure.
3. The present document contains the outcome of the discussions held at the first part of the third session on the foundational document and the related draft decision on the establishment of the panel.
4. The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider the present document with a view to finalizing the foundational document and the related draft decision for consideration and adoption by the intergovernmental meeting to establish a science-policy panel.
5. In finalizing the draft decision and its annex, the ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/8 and build on the agreements reached in its previous sessions.

* The third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution is being held in two parts. The first part of the session was held in Geneva from 17 to 21 June 2024, while the second part will be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 15 to 18 June 2025.

II. [Draft decision [--] of the intergovernmental meeting to establish the panel¹

Establishment of the [insert full name of panel]

The intergovernmental meeting,

[Recognizing the importance of science-based assessments to inform decision-making processes,

Reaffirming that the sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution are crucial for the protection of [the environment and] human health [and the environment],

Bis [Recognizing that air pollution is the single greatest environmental risk to human health, with a disproportionate impact on women, children and the elderly,]

Acknowledging that improving the availability of scientific information and assessments can address capacity challenges, enable more effective and efficient action to minimize or prevent the adverse effects of the unsound management of chemicals and waste, and prevent pollution in order to improve human well-being and contribute to the prosperity of all,

Convinced that a science-policy panel could support countries in their efforts to take action, including to implement multilateral environmental agreements [and other relevant international instruments]; promote the sound management of chemicals and waste and address pollution by providing policy-relevant scientific advice on issues; and further support relevant multilateral agreements, other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders in their work,]

Alt [Recalling resolution 5/8 from the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme on a Science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution],

Expressing appreciation for the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group convened to prepare proposals on the science-policy panel, as well as for the outcome of that work, comprising proposals for the science-policy panel as transmitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to the intergovernmental meeting considering the establishment of a science-policy panel,

Having been convened in [city] by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme further to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/8 of 2 March 2022, by which the Environment Assembly decided that a science-policy panel should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, with details to be further specified according to the provisions of that resolution,

1. *Decides* to establish the [insert full name of panel], as specified in the foundational document set out in annex I to the present decision;
2. *Confirms* that the [insert full name of panel] is an independent intergovernmental body with a programme of work approved by its [members] [Governing Body] to deliver policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive;
3. *Invites* the United Nations Environment Assembly[, the World Health Assembly] and governing bodies of relevant multilateral [environmental] agreements and other [relevant] international instruments and intergovernmental bodies to consider the present decision, as appropriate.

¹ The draft decision and its annex are presented without formal editing.

Annex I to draft decision [--]

Proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel: outcome of the third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

Preamble

[placeholder]

A. Scope, objective and functions of the panel

1. [The objective of the Panel is to strengthen the science-policy interface to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution for the protection of human health and the environment, with the following functions:]

- (a) Undertaking “horizon scanning” to identify issues of relevance to policymakers and, where possible, proposing evidence-based options to address them;
- (b) Conducting assessments of current issues and identifying potential evidence-based options to address, where possible, those issues, in particular those relevant to developing countries;
- (c) Providing up-to-date and relevant information, identifying key gaps in scientific research, encouraging and supporting communication between scientists and policymakers, explaining and disseminating findings for different audiences, and raising public awareness;
- (d) Facilitating information-sharing with countries, in particular developing countries seeking relevant scientific information;
- (e) Capacity-building
Integrate capacity-building into all functions and the work of the panel to strengthen the science-policy interface. Such capacity-building activities should enhance individual capacities of scientists, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders and thereby institutional capacities, particularly in developing countries, guided by the capacity-building priorities, identified by governments and other stakeholders, related to the Panel’s functions and work, by encouraging access to different forms of knowledge, data, and best practices, and enabling the dissemination and encouraging the utilization of the deliverables of the Panel at international, (sub)regional and national levels. In so doing the Panel will ensure effective, geographically [and gender] balanced [and gender-inclusive][and gender-responsive] participation and avoid duplication of work.

B. Operating principles and approaches of the panel

[2. In carrying out its work, the science-policy Panel will be guided by the following operating principles and approaches:

- (a) [Being scientifically independent, and]ensuring credibility and legitimacy including through peer review of its work.
 - (a) bis Ensuring impartiality and transparency.
 - (a) ter [Ensuring][Finding] consensus in its decision-making process on matters of substance.
- (b) Taking an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates a broad range of relevant disciplines and sources, including appropriate sectoral expertise, and relevant forms of knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge.
- [(c) Recognizing the technical knowledge and experience of workers[, including informal workers], involved in the management of chemicals and waste, and promoting a safe and healthy work environment.]
- (d) Having geographical, regional, and gender balance and promoting inclusivity of participation, and considering linguistic diversity, in all relevant aspects of its work.

- (e) Integrating gender equality and equity in all relevant aspects of its work.
- [(f) Producing deliverables that are policy relevant without being policy prescriptive, and, scientifically robust, unbiased and accessible and if appropriate, [prevention focussed] [while also [highlighting] [addressing] [negative socioeconomic][relevant] aspects of policies].]
- (g) Avoiding overlap and duplication of work, and promoting coordination and cooperation, as appropriate, with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant international instruments and intergovernmental bodies.
- (h) Having the flexibility to respond to members' needs, in particular needs of developing countries.
- (i) Incorporating the need to protect human health and the environment, with special attention to those that are vulnerable.
- [(j) Recognising the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, the right to science, and intergenerational equity and the importance of informed participation.]
- [(j) ter Recognising [the implementation of] [that] the sound management of chemicals and waste and prevention of pollution contributes to [improving human well-being and prosperity of all][the full enjoyment of human rights for present and future generations].]
- [(k) Addressing [the prevention of] all forms of [existing and legacy] pollution[, including pollution] related to chemicals and waste and pollution released into the air, water [(including oceans)] and soil.]
- [(l) Integrating capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work.]]

C. Institutional arrangements for the Panel

3. [The panel as a whole encompasses the governing body, the Bureau, subsidiary bodies (including the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee), the secretariat and the groups of experts contributing to the work programme delivery.]

I. [Plenary][Governing Body of the Panel]

4. alt 1 [The [Governing Body [of the Panel]][Plenary] is the [governing and] decision-making body.][of the Panel]
4. alt 2 [The Governing Body of the Panel is the Panel's decision-making body which takes decisions during a plenary meeting]

Membership

5. alt 1 [[Membership in the [Plenary][Governing Body] is open to any State Member of the United Nations [or member of United Nations specialized agencies], [and Regional Economic Integration Organizations,] [as specified further in provisions of the rules of procedure.]] regarding participation by Regional Economic Integration Organizations,] having expressed its intent to be a member of the Panel.]
5. alt 2 [Membership of the governing body of the panel is open to States Members of the United Nations and UN non-member observer states.]

Participation of [observers] [States not members of the Panel, United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations]

6. [Participation as observers is open to] [The [meeting of the] [Governing Body][Plenary] is open to participation as observers to any [Member [or observer] State of the UN][State] not a member of the Panel, any United Nations entity and any other body, organization or agency, whether national or international, governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental, Indigenous Peoples[,] [or other disproportionately impacted populations and other relevant stakeholders,] and local communities [[qualified][with expertise] in matters covered by the Panel], and which [has][have] informed the Secretariat of the Panel of its wish to be represented at sessions of the [Governing Body][Plenary], subject to the rules of procedure.] [Non-governmental organizations are to have consultative status, within the United Nations in order to participate as observers in the Governing Body of the Panel.]

[6. alt The Plenary meeting is open to participation by observers to any State not a member of the Panel, any United Nations entity, organization or agency, whether national or international, governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental, Indigenous Peoples[,] or other disproportionately impacted populations and other relevant stakeholders,] and local communities [qualified in matters covered by the Panel], and which [has][have] informed the Secretariat of the Panel of its wish to be represented at sessions of the [Governing Body][Plenary], subject to the rules of procedure.]

7. [The [Governing Body][Plenary] is open to participation by regional economic integration organizations as observers. The European Union is allowed enhanced participation in sessions of the Plenary, including the right to speak in turn; the right of reply; the right to introduce proposals; the right to provide views; and the ability to support the implementation of the work programme of the Panel through financial support, among other means. [These rights do not grant the ability to be elected to the Bureau of the Panel].]

Functions

8. The functions of the [Plenary][Governing Body of the Panel] include:

- (a) ²
- (b) Adopting the Panel's work programme to deliver on each of its functions;
- (c) Soliciting and responding to submissions and requests for the work programme from governments, [including through the governing bodies of] relevant United Nations entities, relevant multilateral agreements, other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies and [relevant stakeholders] by following procedures and processes set out in relevant documents;
- (d) Ensuring the active and efficient participation of civil society as observers in the Plenary;
- (e) Electing the Bureau, the members of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee and other subsidiary bodies, in accordance with the rules of procedure;
- (f) Establishing subsidiary bodies, in accordance with the rules of procedure.
- (g) Accepting, adopting or approving scoping documents and deliverables, in line with procedures and processes set out in relevant documents.
- (h) Approving a budget and overseeing the allocation of the Trust Fund.
- (i) Deciding on an evaluation process for the periodic and independent review of the Panel's efficiency, effectiveness and impact, in line with procedures and processes set out in relevant documents;
- (j) Adopting and amending rules of procedure and financial rules and procedures [by consensus].

II. Bureau

9. A Bureau is established [by the Governing Body of the Panel] [to provide oversight of the Panel][oversee the implementation of decisions of the Plenary].

Membership

10. The Bureau will be comprised of two members from each of the 5 UN regional groups and elected by the Governing Body, including one chair and 9 vice chairs, one of whom shall act as rapporteur, as provided for in the rules of procedure [, keeping in mind the need for the Panel to have [sector] geographical, regional and gender balance].

11. Members of the bureau are selected for their expertise relevant to the functions of the bureau.

² The matter of decision making will be addressed in paragraph 4.

Functions

12. The functions of the Bureau include:

- (a) Advising the Chair and the secretariat on the preparation and conduct of business of the Governing Body and its subsidiary bodies;
- (b) Monitoring the observance of the Panel's procedures and processes set out in relevant documents;
- (c) Supporting the Panel's work during the intersessional period;
- (d) Monitoring progress in the implementation of decisions of the Plenary/Governing Body, if so directed by the Plenary/Governing Body;
- (e) [Advising the Plenary on coordination between the Panel and other relevant institutions;]
- (e) alt [Advising the Plenary on policy aspects and on coordination and cooperation between the Panel multilateral environmental agreements, other international instruments, intergovernmental bodies, and other science-policy bodies in order to avoid overlap and duplication of work with existing efforts;]

III. Committees and subsidiary bodies

Interdisciplinary Expert Committee

13. An Interdisciplinary Expert Committee is established.

Membership of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee

14. The Interdisciplinary Expert Committee comprises an equal number of members from each of the [regions of the institutions hosting the secretariat] [5 UN regional groups].³

14 alt The Interdisciplinary Expert Committee will be comprised of five experts from each of the 5 UN regional groups. The membership of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee may be modified by a further decision of the Governing Body.

15. Members of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee are nominated by regions and elected by [the Governing Body during a] Plenary, [taking into account the need to ensure][ensuring] the committee is interdisciplinary, [by] ensuring contributions from experts with a broad range of disciplinary expertise; has inclusive participation, including by indigenous peoples; and has geographical, regional and gender balance.⁴

16. Interdisciplinary Expert Committee members are selected for their scientific, technical [, socioeconomic] or [policy] expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the work of the Panel.

17. [Representatives of non-governmental participants as well as the Chair of the United Nations Environment Management Group may [participate] as ex officio members in Interdisciplinary Expert Committee meetings. The representatives of non-governmental participants are elected by and from non-governmental participants engaged in the work of the Panel.⁵]

17. alt Representatives of non-governmental participants as well as the Chair of the United Nations Environment Management Group may [participate] as [observers], by invitation of the Chair, in Interdisciplinary Expert Committee meetings.

18. [Members of the Bureau, representatives of other relevant science-policy interfaces [(including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)] or international organizations, and representatives of

³ The rules of procedure will specify the number from each region. The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider an Interdisciplinary Expert Committee with five members from each of region.

⁴ Guidelines covering the nomination process, length of service, and any rotation of the Chair or Co-Chairs of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee among the range of its members at regular intervals, will be provided for in the rules of procedure. The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider an Interdisciplinary Expert Committee with staggered three-year terms, renewable once.

⁵ Guidelines covering the nomination process and length of service of these representatives will be provided for in the rules of procedure. The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider electing five representatives to serve in this role, one each from health, environment, industry, trade union and public interest groups.

relevant multilateral [environmental] agreements may be invited to participate as observers in meetings of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee.]

Functions of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee

19. The functions of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee include:

- (a) Providing advice to the Plenary and the Bureau on, and coordinating the delivery of, scientific and technical and capacity building aspects of the Panel's programme of work;
- (b) Providing advice and assistance on technical and/or scientific communication matters;
- (c) Developing a transparent peer review process to ensure the highest levels of scientific quality, independence, inclusivity, integrity, and credibility for the Panel's deliverables following procedures and processes set out in relevant documents
- (d) In consultation with the Bureau, advising on and overseeing the process for defining the scope of deliverables;
- (e) Selecting experts for Panel activities as agreed in the Work Programme taking into account the need for different disciplines and forms of knowledge, regional and gender balance and effective contribution and participation by experts from developing countries;
- (f) Engaging the scientific community and other knowledge holders with the work programme;
- (g) Assuring scientific and technical coordination among other bodies set up under the Panel and facilitating coordination between the Panel and related processes to build upon existing efforts.
- (h) Reporting to the Governing Body.

Other subsidiary bodies

20. The Governing Body may establish other subsidiary bodies under the Panel, in line with the rules of procedure.

IV. Secretariat

21. The Panel will be supported by a Secretariat with the following functions:

- (a) Organizing meetings and providing support on organisational, communication, and administrative activities, and technical services, of the Panel, including the preparation of documents and reports to the [Plenary] [Governing Body] of the Panel;
- (b) Supporting members of the [Plenary][Governing Body][of the Panel], Bureau, Interdisciplinary Expert Committee and other subsidiary bodies, to undertake their respective functions;
- (c) Facilitating communication among any other bodies that might be established by the Panel;
- (d) Facilitating communication amongst and with relevant key stakeholders of the Panel;
- (e) Disseminating the Panel's deliverables;
- (f) Supporting in outreach activities and in the production of relevant communication materials;
- (g) Preparing the Panel's draft budget for submission to [Plenary][Governing Body], and preparing financial reports;
- (h) Managing the Trust Fund, as guided by the [Plenary]/[Governing Body];
- (i) Mobilizing financial resources, including identifying donors;
- (j) Assisting in the facilitation of monitoring and evaluation of the Panel's work;
- (k) In consultation with the Bureau, proposing potential strategic partnerships to the [Plenary][Governing Body];
- (l) Under direction of the [Plenary]/[Governing Body], supporting the implementation of any strategic partnerships;

(m) Carrying out any other functions assigned to it by the [Plenary]/[Governing Body].

22. [The Panel, at its first Plenary session, will secure secretariat services. [provided by UNEP] from one or more Intergovernmental Organizations, based on solicited proposals to host the Secretariat. The Secretariat will be hosted in a single location. based on proposals by Member States.]

V. Financial Arrangements

23. [[A Trust Fund [is][will be] established by [Plenary][the Governing Body of the Panel to:

(a) be allocated by [Plenary] [the Governing Body] in an open and transparent manner;

(b) collect voluntary contributions to support the work of the Panel;

(c) be governed by financial rules and procedures adopted by the [Plenary][the Governing Body of the Panel].

24. [[The trust fund is open to voluntary contributions from all sources, including governments, UN bodies, other IGOs and stakeholders such as the private sector and foundations] (d) will come without conditionalities; (e) will not orient the work of the Panel; (f) cannot be earmarked for specific activities.]

24. alt [[Voluntary] Contributions to the Trust Fund are [welcomed][invited] from Governments,[using the UN voluntary indicative scale of assessments as a guideline, and are welcomed][as well as] from United Nations bodies, [the Global Environment Facility], other intergovernmental organizations [, international financial institutions and development banks] and stakeholders such as the private sector and foundations, on the understanding that such funding [the amount of contributions from private sources must not exceed the amount of contributions from public sources in any biennium]:

(a) will come without conditionalities;

(b) will not orient the work of the Panel;

(c) cannot be earmarked for specific activities.]

25. [Exceptions to paragraph 24cf may be provided to allow] additional contributions [may be provided] for specific activities [in line with the agreed prioritization and] [if] approved by the [Plenary] [the Governing Body by consensus] [, preceded by a due diligence process by the secretariat and approved by the bureau].]

25. bis [in kind contributions from governments, Regional Economic Integration Organizations, the scientific community, other knowledge holders and stakeholders will come without conditionalities, nor orient the work or influence prioritization of the Panel and will be consistent with the functions, operational principals or institutional arrangements of the Panel]

26. The [Plenary] [the Governing Body of the Panel] regularly reviews Panel expenditures and budget proposals, and adopts budgets [for the Panel].

27. [The Bureau regularly reviews budget information prepared by the Secretariat.]

28. The Secretariat prepares the Panel's draft budget for submission to [Plenary] [the Governing Body of the Panel], managing the financial arrangements and preparing any necessary financial reports.

28. alt [The Secretariat prepares the Panel's draft budget for submission to the Plenary, manages the approved budget and prepares the financial reports for the bureau and the Plenary]]

VI. Strategic Partnerships

29. [The Governing Body may decide to pursue formal strategic partnerships with relevant multilateral environmental agreements, other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, and other relevant stakeholders, in line with procedures and processes set out in relevant documents.]

30. The [Governing Body of the Panel][Panel][Plenary] [may decide to][shall] pursue formal strategic partnerships with United Nations entities, multilateral agreements[, regional entities, funding agencies] and other [selected][relevant] stakeholders that are active and qualified in the topics covered by the Panel. [Formal strategic partnerships [support][can be a means of] [promoting synergies [and avoiding overlap] towards] [achieving the operating principle[s] [of the Panel] [that includes]

“avoiding overlap and duplication of work, and promoting coordination and cooperation”) [while delivering on any of the Panel’s functions].]

31. The [Secretariat][or the bureau] [subsidiary bodies under the Panel]may propose [the need for the establishment] [for consideration [and approval] of the Plenary the establishment of] [possible][specific] strategic partnerships, [with different sectors, ensuring the absence of conflict of interest] including their contribution to the work of the Panel.

31. alt [The [Panel][Governing Body] may mandate the Secretariat to engage potential strategic partnerships as it relates to their contribution to the identified work programme]

32 The Secretariat shall regularly [inform the Bureau] and [the Governing Body of the Panel][the Plenary] about the [formal][formation of] strategic partnerships and their contribution. Strategic partnerships are subject to periodic review.

33. [In order to encourage and facilitate formal strategic partnerships,] [the Governing Body of the Panel][Plenary] may decide to mandate [to any of [the bodies of the Panel][its sub organizations such as bureau, secretariat, and subsidiary bodies]] [to the secretariat] the development, and periodic updating, of:

(a) guidance for entities wishing to apply to enter in a formal strategic partnership with the Panel, and

(b) guidelines for formalizing partnerships that [the Governing Body][the Plenary] agrees to pursue, including, as appropriate, through the preparation of memoranda of understanding [, joint project documents or work programmes]or contracts [Partnerships shall be established in line with UN and UNEP partnership policies and procurement rules].

(b) bis [a review process for the assessment of the effectiveness of strategic partnerships.]

34. [[Considerations in formalizing strategic partnerships may include] [The Panel may consider the following in formalizing strategic partnerships]:

(a) the function(s) the formal strategic partnership will support;

(b) alignment with the Panel’s scope, objective, and operating principles;

(c) complementarity with the Panel’s work programme;

(c) bis [opportunity to perform work programme activities more effectively, efficiently, economically and ethically;]

(c) ter [experience and capacity of the potential strategic partner in fields relevant to the Panel and its willingness to collaborate in delivering the work programme;]

(c) quater [achievement of a more appropriate regional or thematic balance in the delivery of the work programme;]

(d) opportunities for synergies [and for avoiding overlap][, as appropriate]].]

D. Evaluation of the operational effectiveness and impact of the Panel

35. The Panel’s efficiency, effectiveness and impact [shall] [will] be independently [and externally] reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the [Plenary][Governing Body of the Panel][, with adjustments to be made as necessary].]